

THE FALL OF VIETNAM:

A SOLDIER'S RETROSPECTION

by

DOUGLAS B. STUART

In the spring of 1975, the Republic of Vietnam died. What was particularly shocking was the rapidity with which North Vietnamese forces crushed a South Vietnamese army that had been so carefully nurtured by the United States over the preceding two decades. Today, from the vantage of six years, it is useful to reflect upon the campaign, the military principles demonstrated, and the reasons for the South Vietnamese failure.

THE FINAL CAMPAIGN

The final campaign was conceived by the North Vietnamese in October 1973. Their plan was based upon two critical assessments: that the strength of the South Vietnamese forces was declining, and that the United States lacked the will to intervene. They were correct on both counts. The plan was to seize the central highlands and establish bases close to the major South Vietnamese cities in 1975 and, from these bases, crush the Saigon regime in 1976. However, the completeness of their initial victories caused them to decide in late March 1975 to move directly on to Saigon. From the time of that decision, their main concern was to win before the rainy season could bog down their forces. Thus, 1 May 1975 became their new deadline for the subjugation of South Vietnam.¹

The campaign began as a continuation of the heavy pressures exerted by local communist forces throughout Vietnam during 1974.² In late 1974 the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) made its initial

thrust against isolated, sparsely populated Phuoc Long province. Its capital fell on 6 January 1975, marking the first time South Vietnam had lost an entire province. This victory was particularly revealing to the North Vietnamese because their earlier assessments were confirmed by the lack of US and South Vietnamese reactions (in sharp contrast to the heavy US B-52 reprisal raids and determined ARVN counterattacks that foiled the 1972 Easter offensive).³

The North Vietnamese next turned their attention to the central highlands. After a series of diversionary troop movements to make the ARVN II Corps Commander think the attack would fall on Pleiku,⁴ the NVA struck decisively with three divisions against Ban Me Thuot, the ARVN 23d Division's rear base, which was defended by a reinforced regiment. They cut the road network around the city and then quickly surrounded it. Ban Me Thuot fell three days later. After two relief attempts from Pleiku were repulsed, President Thieu decided to evacuate the highlands.⁵

The strategic withdrawal of the remainder of the 23d Division and supporting II Corps troops from Pleiku and Kontum to the coastal provinces of the corps area was a disaster from the start. The Montagnard Regional and Popular Forces that were to stay behind and cover the withdrawal rioted. Most of the equipment and supplies in Pleiku were abandoned. Further, Route 7B, chosen as the withdrawal route to gain surprise, required such extensive repairs that the movement of the 23d Division and the troop

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Sites of Significant Action – 1975
(Date of capture by NVA in parentheses*)

1. Hue (25 March)
2. Da Nang (29 March)
3. Tam Ky (24 March)
4. Chu Lai
5. Cu Lao Re
6. Quang Ngai (25 March)
7. Kontum (18 March)
8. Pleiku (18 March)
9. Qui Nhon (1 April)
10. Cheo Reo (18 March)
11. Tuy Hoa (1 April)
12. Buon Ho
13. Ban Me Thuot (11 March)
14. Phuoc An (17 March)
15. Khanh Duong (22 March)
16. Ninh Hoa (22 March)
17. Nha Trang (2 April)
18. Cam Ranh (3 April)
19. Dalat (4 April)
20. Phan Rang
21. Phuoc Binh
22. Tay Ninh (30 April)
23. Bien Hoa (30 April)
24. Xuan Loc
25. Phan Thiet
26. Vung Tau (30 April)
27. Can Tho
28. Saigon (30 April)



*Source: Van Tien Dung, *Our Great Spring Victory* (New York & London: Monthly Review Press, 1976), pp. 66-67, 107, and 228.

dependents took up to two weeks rather than the planned three days. Because of collapsing discipline and merciless harassment by the NVA, only a third of the troops ever reached the coast, and the 23d Division ceased to be an effective fighting force.⁶

I Corps in the north fared even worse. This was the strongest South Vietnamese corps, both in quality and numbers. However, heavy fighting in the corps area during 1974 had cost the South Vietnamese over 15,000 casualties and several key terrain features, allowing the NVA to launch armored attacks with little warning. Against I Corps, the NVA massed seven divisions plus others poised along the DMZ.⁷

The enemy began its offensive on 8 March with a two-pronged attack, one against Hue and the other against Tam Ky to the south. The South Vietnamese fought creditably, stopping the initial NVA attacks. Unfortunately, on 10 March President Thieu abruptly ordered the airborne division to redeploy to Saigon as a general reserve force. The transfer of this division and the resulting redeployment of part of the marine division to the Da Nang area, coupled with the bad news from the central highlands and an armored NVA drive through Quang Tri province, caused the local population, including military dependents, to panic and flee toward Hue and Da Nang. Strong NVA pressure forced the marines and 1st ARVN Division toward Hue; there, concern over their families caused much of the 1st Division to break and head for Da Nang. Hue fell with scarcely a fight, while the remainder of the 1st Division disintegrated in a disastrous withdrawal along the coast (Highway 1 to Da Nang had been cut by the NVA). The few troops that made it to Da Nang lost all semblance of discipline. They either searched for their families or joined other soldiers and civilian gangs in a rampage of rape and plunder. Troops, dependents, and civilians fought among themselves for places on any transportation leaving the city. No coherent defense could be organized and Da Nang fell on 29 March. Earlier, the NVA had captured Tam Ky against light resistance, forcing its

defenders to evacuate the zone by ship. These events ended resistance in I Corps area. From the cream of their army, the South Vietnamese managed to evacuate only about 12,000 men, and even these were rendered ineffective because of dispersion and a total breakdown in discipline.⁸

Meanwhile, in II Corps area, the South Vietnamese still occupied the coastal provinces because the ARVN 22d Division had successfully blocked the Binh Khe pass, gateway from the highlands to the coastal plain, for two weeks against two NVA divisions. In early April, with about two-thirds of its men battle casualties, the outgunned and outnumbered division gave way and was evacuated from the corps area by sea. The NVA then rapidly overran the coastal plain and seized Nha Trang and Qui Nhon.⁹ The only other action in this region occurred on 16 April at Phan Rang. Here, the South Vietnamese hoped to stop or slow the NVA advance south with the reconstituted ARVN 2d Division that had earlier been evacuated from I Corps. After a short, fierce battle, however, three NVA divisions defeated this ragtag force.¹⁰

The NVA now turned its attention to the decisive phase—the capture of Saigon. The defenses of Saigon consisted of an outer ring, 30 to 55 miles from the city, composed of the 25th Division anchored at Tay Ninh, the 5th Division at Lai Khe, the 18th Division at Xuan Loc, and the 7th Division at My Tho, and an inner ring, composed of remnants of the 22d Division and whatever else could be scraped together.¹¹

The Saigon phase of the campaign began with the battle of Xuan Loc. Here, the 18th Division, reinforced by an airborne brigade, fought ARVN's best battle of the war. It held its ground for two weeks against four NVA divisions, functioned well as a division-level force, and (for the only time in the campaign) was provided effective air support.¹² Outgunned, outmanned, but never outfought, the 18th Division continued to repulse NVA attacks until, on 21 April, out of ammunition and almost surrounded, its surviving battalions were withdrawn by helicopter. The

remnants of this brave division were finally crushed by the NVA II Corps along the Saigon River.¹³

The NVA moved quickly to isolate Saigon and prevent the South Vietnamese from forming a strong inner perimeter around the city. They dispatched some 16 divisions to cut off and defeat the remaining outer perimeter divisions, destroy the inner perimeter, and cut Highway 4 from the delta. Because the ARVN defense was uncoordinated, these tasks were easily accomplished during the last week of April, leaving the city practically defenseless. On 30 April, the last President of the Republic of Vietnam, General Duong Van Minh (Thieu had resigned eight days before) surrendered to the NVA.¹⁴ This act essentially ended the campaign, and the Vietnamese Thirty Years' War was finally over.

ANALYSIS

We should note in the beginning that the North Vietnamese did not start the campaign with overwhelming force superiority. The table below provides a comparison of the strengths of the forces within South Vietnam at the outset of the campaign.

COMPARATIVE PERSONNEL & MATERIEL
STRENGTHS—SPRING 1975¹⁵

	<u>South Vietnam</u>	<u>North Vietnam</u>
Army:		
Regular Forces	180,600	225,000
Regional/Popular Forces	482,000	N/A
Guerrillas	—	40,000
Administrative	—	110,000
Total Personnel	662,600	375,000
Tanks & APCs (approx.)	1230	600
Air Force:		
Personnel	63,000	(unreported)
Aircraft	1673	342
Air Defense	(unreported)	
AA Regt	—	23
SAM Regt	—	1
Navy:		
Personnel	40,258	3,000
Craft	1507	39

On paper, at least, the South Vietnamese

were superior in every category except air defense. Why, then, did South Vietnam lose the war? Numerous reasons are discernible, summarized as follows:

- ARVN forces were of necessity physically scattered.

- Large numbers of Viet Cong and NVA troops remained in South Vietnam after the 1973 truce.

- The United States drastically reduced military aid toward the war's end.

- The NVA developed superior tactical and strategic plans.

- The South Vietnamese suffered poor leadership, with consequent dissipation of morale and discipline.

- ARVN employed poor logistical policy.

- South Vietnam mismanaged its minority populations.

- The NVA forces developed effective air defense.

Let us address each of the foregoing reasons in turn.

First is the much-discussed fact that ARVN forces were spread throughout South Vietnam in defense of its cities, towns, military installations, bridges, and other fixed points.¹⁶ The NVA, on the other hand, could concentrate forces at points of its choosing, thus overwhelming the thinly scattered government forces and stripping away South Vietnamese territory piecemeal. This successful tactic underscores the military axiom that the ability to concentrate forces to gain local superiority at the decisive point is more important than aggregate military superiority throughout the theater. It further shows the weakness of prognosticating war or battle outcomes purely on the basis of comparative numbers. But on a purely strategic level, the Vietnam experience teaches that national defense against escalating guerrilla assault may necessarily entail enlarging the ground war to the enemy's homeland, forcing him to divert forces for his own static defense.

The second liability to South Vietnam's battlefield success was that some 145,000 Viet Cong guerrillas and NVA troops had remained in South Vietnam after the 1973

truce.¹⁷ These forces kept constant pressure on the South Vietnamese rear areas and prevented any large-scale shifting of forces to meet the selectively massed NVA conventional attacks.¹⁸ When conditions of terrain, flora, and indigenous support permit guerrillas to survive in rear or sanctuary areas, small numbers of guerrillas can fix disproportionate numbers of government forces in place.¹⁹ In addition, the South Vietnamese were unable to mass their artillery fires effectively to counter the NVA main forces because their tubes were fragmented throughout the country in battery or platoon positions. Such a deployment was necessary for counter guerrilla operations, but proved disastrous in defending against conventional attacks.

Another important obstacle to South Vietnamese success was the severe US aid cut. Taking inflation into consideration, US aid in 1975 was only 20 percent of that given in 1973. General Westmoreland has described the situation well:

[ARVN's task was] made all the more difficult by the equipment and ammunition shortages. Furthermore, the harsh rationing of ammunition that Thieu felt impelled to institute because of the dearth of American aid remained in effect: 1 hand grenade per man per month, 85 rifle bullets per man per month, 4 rounds of 105-mm artillery ammunition per howitzer per day and 2 rounds for 155s. The defensive assignment was made still more difficult because the North Vietnamese, not being obliged to withhold anything for the defense of their own country, held the initiative, free to strike when and where they chose, only minimally deterred by a South Vietnamese Air Force hurting for spare parts and fuel for its planes and threatened by sophisticated Russian-supplied anti aircraft weapons brought into South Vietnam.²⁰

In contrast, while American aid to the South was plummeting, the North Vietnamese were receiving increasing aid from the communist bloc nations.

The North Vietnamese capitalized on the disadvantages afflicting their enemy with excellent strategic and tactical plans. By 1975, the NVA had matured into a modern mechanized force; to exploit this new capability, they upgraded the Ho Chi Minh Trail into a two-lane highway, paralleled by a pipeline with pumping stations for supplying fuel.²¹ This "trail" was supplemented by a network of east-west feeder roads, particularly in the I Corps area, that allowed the North Vietnamese to launch their attacks eastward with great rapidity from sanctuary positions close to the South Vietnamese positions. By attacking on a basically west-to-east axis, the NVA prevented the ARVN divisions in I and II Corps from concentrating their forces as they could have done if the NVA had been forced to launch their assault across the DMZ along a generally north-to-south axis.

The NVA tactical plan, most evident at Ban Me Thuot and Saigon, was to isolate the battlefield and then mass overwhelming combat power to crush the defenders; for example, at Ban Me Thuot in II Corps area, the NVA had a 5.5 to 1 advantage in infantry and a 2.1 to 1 advantage in artillery.²² Moreover, their choice of targets was excellent. Ban Me Thuot was an appropriate initial target in II Corps because it contained the ARVN 23d Division's logistics base and most of the soldiers' dependents.²³ The province of Phuoc Long in III Corps was an ideal early target since it posed a potentially

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embarrassing test of South Vietnamese and US resolve, while offering a high probability of success and relatively little risk.

In terms of quality, South Vietnamese strategy and tactics offered a sharp contrast to those of the North Vietnamese. The South's basic strategy was to retain all terrain held at the time of the 1973 cease-fire rather than orient on the destruction of NVA main forces. As a result, they were stretched thin everywhere and poorly deployed with respect to defense of the population; seven of their 13 divisions were committed to defending only one sixth of their people.²⁴

Ironically, the South Vietnamese recognized that they were dangerously overextended. Well before the attack, they had begun to develop contingency plans to evacuate I Corps and the highlands. However, President Thieu aborted this planning because of the potentially bad psychological effects on the rest of the country and because he hoped that other solutions could be found.²⁵ Although such a plan would have put the South Vietnamese on a stronger strategic footing, it is easy to understand their reluctance to abandon terrain for which they had fought so long and so hard. Furthermore, the South Vietnamese could not (or, at least, believed they could not) concentrate their main forces to meet the NVA, and leave territorial forces to hold off the local communists. As a result, their divisions were engaged and defeated piecemeal. Even when ARVN divisions were fighting in close proximity, as in I Corps or around Saigon, little effort was made to coordinate their operations. Moreover, when reinforcements were employed, they tended to be committed gradually and timidly rather than decisively. For example, at Xuan Loc, east of Saigon, the South Vietnamese reinforced the 18th Division with only one of the two airborne brigades available. Similarly, South Vietnamese strategy was obsessively defensive. Despite air superiority and, during the first month of the campaign, NVA lines of communications that ran essentially across the front of their positions, the South Vietnamese did not seriously attempt to interdict or harass traffic on the

Ho Chi Minh Trail or other NVA supply conduits.

Thieu's order to evacuate the highlands has been severely criticized, with some even calling it the catalyst for defeat.²⁶ Certainly the action demonstrates the difficulty of conducting a withdrawal well and how easily one can degenerate into a rout. It further demonstrates the importance of proper planning and control in such operations, both of which were notably lacking. Moreover, the use of unexpected routes to surprise the enemy can backfire unless plans include overcoming the reasons why the use of those routes would not be expected; in this case, Route 7B required such extensive repairs that its use actually worked to the disadvantage of the South Vietnamese. In addition, the withdrawal illustrates dramatically the importance of refugee control, particularly when throngs of military dependents are mixed among the refugees. Considering all factors, however, one must agree with Ray Bowers that the "order to withdraw was probably less disastrous than the chaotic nature of its execution."²⁷ If successful, it could have reduced significantly the overextension of the South Vietnamese forces and possibly permitted them to conduct a more coherent defense.

Of course, poor execution is a function of poor leadership, and it is to the question of leadership, particularly at the higher levels, that we must turn if the ARVN collapse is ever to be completely understood. At the national level, President Thieu closely controlled field operations despite the fact that he seldom visited the fronts.²⁸ He ordered abrupt changes in strategic plans without allowing the field commanders time to react properly—the evacuation of the highlands and the withdrawal of the airborne division from I Corps are good examples. He compounded the problems posed by his overcontrol by refusing to listen to the advice of his field commanders and by surrounding himself with a generally incompetent staff.²⁹

Even making allowances for the problems inflicted by their president, however, the senior ARVN commanders generally performed poorly. For example, in

the withdrawal from Pleiku, the corps commander abandoned the battle area, flying ahead to Nha Trang without so much as a gesture to reassure his subordinates who were left behind to face the NVA onslaught.³⁰ Tam Ky in I Corps fell when the assistant commander of the 2d ARVN Division and the province chief fled after an NVA tank accompanied by an infantry company strayed into the town.³¹ At Da Nang, defenses collapsed in almost a chain reaction as the evacuation of senior commanders became known.³² Further, the I Corps Commander reacted to reverses by going into seclusion, making no real effort to inspire the troops.³³ In sharp contrast was the performance of Brigadier General Le Minh Dao, commander of the 18th Division, which formed Saigon's eastern defenses. Not only did he turn a mediocre division into a formidable fighting force, but he stayed with it to the very end, actively directing operations and inspiring his men.³⁴ The performance of his division reemphasizes that the attitudes of commanders are infectious and that positive leaders are most vital when affairs are going badly.

Conversely, the North Vietnamese leadership was excellent. The North Vietnamese corrected their long-standing deficiency of rigid adherence to prearranged plans by allowing and even encouraging field commanders to take advantage of unexpected changes in the tactical situation without awaiting orders from higher headquarters. The leaders were careful to rehearse their new armor and infantry tactics through staged attacks against ARVN forces in late 1974. These factors, added to the traditional aggressiveness of NVA leaders, made the North Vietnamese a far deadlier enemy in 1975 than they had ever been before.³⁵

Still another reason for the South Vietnamese defeat was the breakdown of ARVN morale and discipline, which was of course related to the poor ARVN leadership discussed above. The catalysts for this breakdown were the early battlefield defeats and concern for the safety of military dependents. Later, the low morale and lack of discipline became major contributing

factors to the poor South Vietnamese performance on the battlefield; frequently, the South Vietnamese troops gave up without a fight as soon as the NVA arrived on the scene. There is little evidence that any serious attempts were made to regain control once discipline broke down. The loss of discipline was so great that many South Vietnamese civilians feared their own renegade troops more than they did the NVA.³⁶ This breakdown also prevented the South Vietnamese from reconstituting many of their divisions that had been evacuated from the north. In contrast to the South Vietnamese loss of discipline was the exemplary behavior of the NVA, which was "well-led, disciplined, and determined."³⁷

Deteriorating civil-military relations were compounded by the Vietnamese draft laws, which caused military service (for an indefinite term) to fall disproportionately upon the poor and disadvantaged. Conversely, children of the rich could easily avoid service.³⁸ Resentment over this situation undoubtedly contributed to the lawlessness of the South Vietnamese troops. Moreover, the attitudes of Vietnamese society outside the war zone toward the early defeats, whether of indignation or indifference, were not helpful to the war effort. Rather than volunteering to help, students in Saigon demonstrated and fought with police. As late as the battle of Xuan Loc, occurring on the northeast portal of Saigon in April 1975, civilians in the capital showed little interest in the war.³⁹ A closely related cause for dissension among the ARVN soldiers was the widespread corruption and war profiteering that prevailed, not only among the civilian population but also among military officers.⁴⁰ Corruption, of course, had long been common in South Vietnam. However, as inflation increased in the 1970's and military pay failed to keep pace, corrupt practices drove wedges between the troops and their officers. For example, there were reports that the wounded had to pay helicopter pilots to fly medical evacuation missions.⁴¹ In fairness, President Thieu did make efforts to remove some of the more corrupt senior officials from office,⁴² but his

actions proved to be a mere drop in the bucket.

Corruption had another adverse effect; it siphoned funds that could have been used to buy critically short supplies and ammunition. It has been estimated that as much as 25 percent of ARVN's military payroll was in the name of dead or deserted soldiers who were kept on the roll so that corrupt officers could collect their salaries.⁴³

A final factor in the breakdown of ARVN discipline and morale was the policy allowing married soldiers to keep their families with them in their deployment areas (soon to become the battle areas), while the North Vietnamese dependents were safe at home. This factor proved to be decisive in the disintegration of the South Vietnamese forces, since abandonment of their dependents to an uncertain fate in a battle zone would and did place impossible strains on the loyalty and steadfastness of the soldiers. This reemphasizes the point made by Liddell Hart in discussing the US Civil War:

Man has two supreme loyalties—to country and to family. And with most men the second, being more personal, is the stronger. . . . Even the bonds of patriotism, discipline, and comradeship are loosened when the family is itself menaced.⁴⁴

The South Vietnamese policy on dependents is hard to criticize since there were few havens in South Vietnam and because, so long as operations were conducted away from base areas, the presence of families was a positive morale factor. However, there were no apparent plans to evacuate dependents from the battle zones to safer, defensible areas such as Da Nang or Hue in I Corps. Had they been evacuated in a timely manner, the outcome might have been far different.

Logistically, the South Vietnamese aggravated their tactical predicaments by indecision as to which targets to attack and by failing to expend ammunition decisively when the attack came.⁴⁵ Such imprudently husbanded ammunition was often abandoned in huge quantities after defeats caused, in part, by failure to fire the ammunition in the

first place. The logistical plight of the South Vietnamese emphasizes the importance of adequate funding in the less glamorous area of ordnance, of proper planning in its use (particularly when it is in short supply), and of applying combat power in sufficient volume to be decisive.

The South Vietnamese handling of civilian and minority populations in the war zone also had a serious impact on the campaign. In addition to failure to control civilian refugees along the routes of withdrawal, the South Vietnamese reverted to their old practice of treating the Montagnards as second-class citizens.⁴⁶ Such treatment drove them into the open arms of the NVA, whom they actively assisted in the fighting in the highlands.⁴⁷

Finally, the campaign illustrated the importance of effective air defense. The NVA air defense discouraged the South Vietnamese Air Force from interdicting the Ho Chi Minh trail and, except for the battle of Xuan Loc, from providing effective close air support of ground operations. In other battles, close air support was so poor that it actually hampered operations at times. For example, during the battle of Ban Me Thuot, South Vietnamese close air support aircraft bombed the 23d Division advanced command post by mistake rather than the NVA positions they were called on to attack.⁴⁸ Much of the problem was a refusal by South Vietnamese pilots to fly low enough to be effective. South Vietnamese Air Vice Marshal Nguyen Cao Ky attributed this refusal to cowardice among the pilots. But even so, such cowardice was a tribute to the effectiveness of the NVA air defense.⁴⁹

CONCLUSION

Abandoned by their patrons and severely overextended, the South Vietnamese contributed to their own collapse by violating basic principles in each area of military endeavor—strategy, tactics, logistics, and leadership. The ultimate cause for defeat was the loss of will by the common soldiers occasioned by lack of inspirational leaders, unfair draft laws, corruption, and lack of

plans to care for their dependents. Given this fundamental lack of resolve to fight, other weaknesses were compounded, laying the groundwork for failure. On the other side, the excellent tactics and strategy of the disciplined and well-led NVA never allowed the South Vietnamese to regain their balance. To this assessment, two ironic footnotes may be added. First, the United States has been criticized for building ARVN into the wrong kind of army, that is, one conceived to fight a conventional rather than a guerrilla war. When the final crisis came, however, it was ARVN's inability to fight a conventional war that caused its defeat. Second, in modern times, the rapidity of ARVN's collapse has been exceeded only by the defeat in 1940 of their former colonial masters, the French. They were defeated by Hitler's *Wehrmacht* in about six weeks.

NOTES

1. Van Tien Dung, "Great Spring Victory," *FBIS Daily Report Supplement*, 7 June 1976, pp. 7, 57.
2. Stephen T. Hosmer, Konrad Keller, and Brian M. Jenkins, *The Fall of South Vietnam: Statements by Vietnamese Military and Civilian Leaders* (Rand Report R-2208-OSD[HIST], 1978), p. 79.
3. Dung, p. 7; Hosmer et al., p. 80.
4. Ray L. Bowers, "Defeat and Retaliation: The Communist Triumph," in *The Vietnam War*, ed. Bernard C. Nalty (New York: Crown, 1979), p. 230.
5. Hosmer et al., pp. 82-86.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 91-96.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 102.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 103-12; Denis Warner, *Certain Victory: How Hanoi Won the War* (Kansas City, Kans.: Sheed, Andrews and McMeel, 1977), pp. 54-76.
9. It would be unfair not to mention the gallant fighting of one of the airborne brigades about 50 miles north of Nha Trang. This lightly equipped brigade held off a reinforced NVA division (which included a large complement of armor and artillery) for about a week, inflicting heavy losses. The airborne brigade was virtually destroyed in this action ("Toward the Final Agony," *Time*, 14 April 1975, p. 11; Hosmer et al., pp. 99-100).
10. Warner reports the ARVN force at Phan Rang as having been the remnants of the 22d Division and an airborne brigade. The South Vietnamese respondents to Hosmer et al. report that force to have been the 2d Division fleshed out with Regional Forces personnel and that a Ranger group had replaced the airborne brigade by the start of the battle (Warner, pp. 217-20; Hosmer et al., pp. 121-22).

11. Dung, p. 90.
12. Hosmer et al., pp. 122-23; Harvey A. DeWeerd, "The Fall of Vietnam: An Inside View," *Army*, 29 (July 1979), p. 20.
13. Warner, pp. 215-47; Frank Snepp, *Decent Interval* (New York: Random House, 1977), p. 394.
14. Dung, pp. 116-17.
15. Bowers, p. 230.
16. Hosmer et al., p. 62.
17. Bowers, p. 228.
18. "The Communists Tighten the Noose," *Time*, 21 April 1975, p. 20.
19. US Department of the Army, *Special Forces Operations (U)*, Field Manual 31-20 (Washington: GPO, 1977), pp. 108-20.
20. William C. Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1976), p. 397. See also Warner, p. 8 and Dung, p. 5.
21. Warner, p. 10.
22. Dung, p. 18.
23. Hosmer et al., p. 85.
24. Warner, p. 13.
25. *Ibid.*, pp. 8, 14.
26. DeWeerd, p. 19.
27. Bowers, p. 232.
28. "Next, the Struggle for Saigon," *Time*, 28 April 1975, p. 14.
29. Hosmer et al., pp. 23, 25.
30. *Ibid.*, pp. 92-94, 96.
31. Warner, p. 69.
32. Hosmer et al., p. 114.
33. Warner, pp. 71-72.
34. To be exact, Dao was evacuated with the last four battalions of the 18th Division. A small force under Colonel Le Xuan Hien stayed behind to cover the withdrawal. They were quickly crushed by the NVA (Warner, p. 205; Snepp, p. 394; "Vietnam's Last Battle," *Newsweek*, 28 April 1975, p. 19).
35. Warner, pp. 19-20.
36. "Saigon Under Siege," *Time*, 14 April 1975, p. 12.
37. DeWeerd, p. 15.
38. Hosmer et al., p. 57. The North Vietnamese soldiers also served for an indefinite period and there probably were inequities in their draft system also. However, any resentments were minimized because they were winning, and inequities in sacrifice were less readily apparent when operating out of their country.
39. "Toward the Final Agony," *Time*, p. 11; "The Communists Tighten the Noose," *Time*, p. 15.
40. Hosmer et al., pp. 30-32.
41. Warner, pp. 10-11.
42. Snepp, p. 117.
43. Warner, p. 9.
44. B. H. Liddell Hart, *Strategy* (New York: Praeger, 1975), p. 153.
45. DeWeerd, p. 16.
46. "Thieu's Risky Retreat," *Time*, 31 March 1975, p. 38.
47. Hosmer et al., p. 92.
48. "South Viet Nam: Holding On," *Time*, 24 March 1975, p. 19.
49. Hosmer et al., pp. 71, 84.

